

## The Spirit of Caleb

By Ben Godwin



To be spiritually successful as we face a new year, we need to have the right spirit. A good one to emulate is the Spirit of Caleb. God gave a glowing endorsement of this exceptional man, “...My servant Caleb, because he had **another spirit** with him, and hath **followed me fully**, him will I bring into the [promised] land...” (Num.14:24). Caleb had a different spirit. The Living Bible says, “Caleb is a different kind of man.” Six times the Bible mentions that he “**wholly followed the Lord.**” Caleb was not only different from the Canaanites (the heathen), he was also different from most of the Israelites who were supposed to be God’s people. You see, we are not called to follow the crowd or even the crowd who calls themselves Christians. Rather, we are called to follow the man who is called the Christ.

Caleb, mentioned 32 times in Scripture, was one of the twelve spies Moses sent to scout the Promised Land. Caleb was a leader of the Tribe of Judah. His name means “**bold**” or “**impetuous.**” Someone who is impetuous has a tendency to act or attack. In other words, Caleb was a doer not just a talker. This trait made him a great asset to Joshua during Israel’s conquest of Canaan. Caleb also, strangely, means “**dog**” or “**raging with canine madness.**” Apparently, he had a dog-like tenacity that made him a ferocious fighter, something we all need to resist the devil and fight the good fight of faith.

- **The Spirit of Caleb looks forward not backward.**

When the majority of the Israelites wanted to go *backward* to Egypt, Caleb wanted to go *forward* to Canaan, “*If the Lord delight in us, then **He will bring us into this land**, and give it to us; a land which flows with milk and honey.*” (Num. 14:8) Many people live in the past and, as a result, forfeit their future. There’s an old saying, “the past should be a guidepost not a hitching post.” We can learn from the past, but we can’t live there. Neither can we change the past. No wonder Paul wrote, “**forgetting those things which are behind**, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:13-14) You can’t drive a car very well staring at the rearview mirror. If you do, you will certainly run off the road and crash. You must look ahead. God has great things in store for us this year. Jesus gave us a sober three-word warning, “*Remember Lot’s wife.*” We must stop looking backward and, like Caleb, start looking forward.

- **The Spirit of Caleb reacts with faith not fear.**

Ten of the spies brought back a negative report spawned by fear. Only Joshua and Caleb gave a positive report fueled by faith. As preachers say, ten brought back *gripes*, only two brought back *grapes*. Caleb saw grapes and promises, the other spies saw giants and problems. Caleb saw milk and honey, the others saw calories and cholesterol. Fear will paralyze you but faith will energize you! Caleb boldly declared, “*Let us go up at once, and possess [the land]; for we are well able to overcome it.*” Caleb focused on the opportunities while others focused on the opposition. Consequently, only Joshua and Caleb inherited the Promised Land of that generation. The doubters perished in the wilderness. Perched on the threshold of Canaan, God made Israel make a U-turn and wander for the next 40 years, one year for each day they spied out the land (Num. 14:34). If only they all had the Spirit of Caleb and reacted with faith instead of fear. “*For God hath not given us the **spirit of fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*” (2 Tim. 1:7)

- **The Spirit of Caleb is aggressive not passive.**

At the ripe old age of 85, Caleb was still not content to retire. You'd think he'd settle down in a corner of Canaan and tell war stories to his grandchildren. Not this fellow. He told Joshua his strength had not diminished and he had one more conquest in mind. *"Now therefore give me this mountain...if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out..."* (Josh. 14:12) Joshua blessed him and granted Hebron as part of his inheritance. Hebron, an ancient city Abraham and Sarah visited and were buried near, was situated 19 miles Southwest of what became Jerusalem. At 3,040 feet above sea level, Hebron was the highest town in Palestine. It was later designated as one of the cities of refuge (Josh. 20:7) and served as David's capitol the first seven years of his reign (2 Sam. 2:11).

Caleb was a man of altitude! He was not satisfied living in the low land, he wanted the high ground. He claimed and conquered a mountainous region inhabited by the Anakims (a clan of giants). Can you imagine this 85 year old man brandishing his sword against three of the sons of Anak (Josh. 15:14) and running them off of their own property? Inspiring isn't it? That's what I call aggressive! Incidentally, Hebron means *"alliance, league or confederacy."* Why was Caleb so victorious? He was in alliance with God and His purpose for his life. *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"* If we are allied with God, we become as invincible as He is. Furthermore, if the enemy attacks us, he's picking a fight with God, who will speedily avenge His own.

We must resist the "I've arrived" mentality. The Spirit of Caleb is to keep learning, growing, reaching, maturing, pressing. Paul, after 30 plus years in ministry, said, *"Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."* (Phil. 3:12 NKJV) Keep pressing on, child of God. Don't allow yourself to become passive or complacent. Caleb's daughter, Achsah, caught this same spirit. When she was married to Othniel, Joshua's successor and the first judge of Israel, Caleb gave them a field for a wedding present. Like father, like daughter, Achsah wanted more, *"Give me a blessing; since you have given me land in the South, give me also springs of water. So he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs."* (Josh. 15:19 NKJV) It sounds very similar to Caleb's request to Joshua, *"Give me this mountain."* The Spirit of Caleb is expressed in bold, aggressive faith. We can't afford to be passive and have a fine-if-God-does, fine-if-God-doesn't answer my prayer attitude. God rewards those who *diligently* seek him. If we want to walk in God's promises, we need to adopt the Spirit of Caleb—the courageous champion who looked forward not backward, reacted with faith instead of fear and aggressively pursued his inheritance. Jesus said it best, *"the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."* (Mt. 11:12 NIV)